GEORGIA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Fact Sheet
Department of Natural Resources
The BP Deepwater Horizon Spill and Coastal Georgia

• On April 20, 2010, an explosion occurred on the Deepwater Horizon oil-drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico. When the drilling platform sank, it created a leak that has resulted in the largest release of oil into the marine environment in U.S. history. Thus far, efforts to stop the release of oil have been unsuccessful.

• The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has been working with the U.S. Coast Guard to plan for the potential impact of oil from the Deepwater Horizon event on our coastal marshes and beaches. At this time, we believe there is a very low probability of the oil reaching Georgia's marshes and beaches.

• A critical factor for Georgia's response is how soon the release of oil is reduced and/ or stopped. The sooner the undersea oil release is stopped, the less likely it is that Georgia will be affected.

• Should oil reach the Atlantic Ocean and affect our state, the Coastal Area Contingency Plan would be implemented and a unified command structure would be activated. This will include the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Department of Natural Resources, as well as the responsible party, BP. Numerous other federal, state and local agencies would also be involved.

• National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists monitor the currents and the oil's path daily. Currently, most of the oil on the surface of the Gulf of Mexico has traveled northward, toward Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the Florida panhandle. NOAA is also assessing the possibility of a light oil sheen, tar balls, or weathered oil traveling eastwardly and southerly towards the southern tip of Florida.

• **IF** the sheen or tar balls were to reach the southern tip of Florida, some 500 miles from our state, it would take about five days for the oil to travel in the Gulf Stream up the Florida eastern coastline toward the offshore Georgia waters. The Gulf Stream passes the Georgia coast at distance of over 70 miles from shore.

• The two most likely ways for oil to move from the Gulf Stream to the Georgia coast would be on surface currents created by several days of strong easterly winds or a tropical storm/ hurricane. It is also possible that oil could be carried closer to shore by eddies from the Gulf Stream.

• IF any of these events happen, the oil reaching shore would be so heavily weathered that dispersants and burning mal' not be effective, and mechanical means of collecting the oil mal' need to be employed. The most likely impacts that we would see from the oil spill would be tar balls and stranding of heavily weathered oil on marsh grass and along the beaches.

• **SHOULD** oil reach our coast, the public will be notified by signs on beaches, media reports and our website at www.gadnr.org.

• If oil from this spill does impact Georgia's coast, BP would be considered the responsible party. They would be expected to participate in the unified command and provide resources for the response.

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The South Carolina Department of Health and Environment::.1 Control provided some background information for this Fact Sheet